

Worksheet Question 3

Identify specific skills or knowledge that you want to teach. These may be unique or might fit together as part of a package. For example, you might give evidence that family counseling is effective, present a case study of family counseling, and teach skills on how to conduct family counseling.

The next part of this exercise gets more specific and is more like an outline to help you determine what you need to teach, based on your goals. If your goal was for VR counselors to become familiar with a new state policy, the specific knowledge might be walking through each part of the policy, identifying what has changed, and identifying the implications for daily work. If your goal was to use a new intake form, the knowledge, skills, and practice would be going through each part of the form, identifying any difficult or unclear portions and how to fill them out correctly, and trying out the new form with a sample case.

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What is the best starting point for the VR counselors on your team?

Do they need to know about new evidence or programs?

Do they need to identify ways to overcome hesitation about taking on new skills or activities?

Do they need to learn specific skills?

Do they need to practice those skills?

It can be tempting when planning how to teach a skill to start at the beginning and go through every step in detail, to be as complete as possible. However, that may or may not be what your learners need. Before doing this step, revisit the principles of adult learning:

What do your learners need to know?

Is this a case where attitudes and barriers are important?

What skills do they already have? What skills would be new or need adjustment?

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What knowledge, skills, and attitudes do the VR counselors on your team already possess?

Are they new in their roles or experienced?

What do they believe is important and valuable about their roles?

What do they believe are the biggest challenges in their work?

What are their goals and how can this teaching activity help them meet those goals?

How does your teaching topic apply to their on-the-job needs?

How can they use the information tomorrow?

Are your learners new on the job or veterans?

If your learners already have a lot of expertise, you might focus on only what is different instead of everything from soup to nuts. You want to meet them where they are and respect their expertise. Conversely, if you have a new team or one with mixed experiences, you might want to structure your teaching with more basic or refresher information and give counselors who are more experienced an opportunity to help newer colleagues.

Also, think about how to make the training practical. Is this good-to-know information or does it change something right away? Think about how your training topic might affect their next appointment or their job next week. Making information relevant shows respect for adult learners' time.

In my example, I might want to start by sharing the case study I found: It will give them the basics of what social skills training is and an example of how it was successful in a similar organization. After that, I

might want to tie it back to our clients and their goals so that VR counselors can start to picture how this will address challenges and opportunities seen in their work. I might walk through the actual steps of what social skills training should encompass. Finally, I might want to plan an opportunity to practice the coaching together.